A DESIGN FOR BUILDING HOUSES FOR THE POOR.

At a time of the year when every man's hearth is, or is supposed to be, surrounded by his family, and where good cheer should prevail, although in thousands of instances the very reverse is the case, I may presume that any thing that has a tendency to improve those wretched dens (for they are entitled to no other appellation) of the poor will not be unacceptable, for in looking at their deplorable dwellings one cannot be surprised at their equally miserable and squalid appearance, since in many cases a whole family of five or six, and too frequently children grown up, of both sexes, are crowded together in one room, and in thousands of cases two or three families have joint occupation, by being located in the corners of one small room. Upon an average, where the poor reside, six or seven families occupy one small house—using one front door, one passage, one staircase, one small yard, and one privy. Thus the quiet and the noisy, the industrious and the lazy, the sober and intemperate, the virtuous and the licentious, the honest and the dishonest, the clean and the slovenly, are indiscriminately huddled together, and so, from constant intercommunication, the good can hardly fail soon to acquire the habits and imbibe the principles of the bad. There is usually very inadequate supply of water, for an hour or less only three times a week, to a small butt in the yard, open at the top at all times and seasons, and probably not cleaned out once in a year, and therefore receiving a constant increase of mud, slime, and rubbish, full of insects, blacks and filth from the houses, from which the water is taken for all domestic purposes; the back yard a receptacle for all kinds of refuse, filth, and damp, besides a constant pestilential odour escaping from the cesspool and privy, placed near and in sight of the windows, so that it cannot be resorted to in private. Every drop of water used throughout the house has to be carried up one, two, or three flights of stairs, and together with every description of dirt, is returned by the same route. With all these evils to contend against, it becomes well nigh impossible for the occupants to keep themselves either clean, in health, or free from the contaminating influence of the evils by which they are surrounded, and without any means being provided for the admission of fresh air, or the escape of the foul, from the rooms.

Looking at all the accumulated evils to which the inmates of these wretched houses are exposed, [illegible] cannot be [illegible] their seeking comfort in the gin palace, the public house, or crowding together in the street, or elsewhere; whereas, if they had well drained, well ventilated, and comfortable houses, where they could rest and sleep in comfort, without being disturbed by their noisy neighbours or vermin, they would take a pride in them they now loathe; during their day's toil they would be buoyed up with the thought that at the end of their labour they had a home where they could rest in peace and comfort.

Any further dissertation would be superfluous, since it must be obvious to the most casual observer, that dwellings of that loathsome description, can be but little better than hot-beds for every sort of vice, crime, and misery. The good effects of our many institutions, which have in view the amelioration of the poor, are far outbalanced by the evils attendant on this system of indiscriminate crowding together. As a remedy, it is proposed to build houses on an entirely new arrangement (as shown in the accompanying plans), by which the poor man's comforts would be increased, his energies roused, and his whole moral character elevated in a greater degree than can be at present by our charitable institutions—good and numerous as they are.

To give a full description of their construction would occupy too great a space here; the full particulars have been already published in a pamphlet, a copy of which I shall be most happy to furnish to any one desirous of carrying some of the designs out; they can be built in single blocks of 24 rooms each (which would be equal to four six-roomed houses), with a street front and back, so as to have them thrown quite open on both sides. On the parlour floor would be arranged the single rooms, four to each block, and ten pair of double rooms; they would be of a uniform size of 11 feet 6 inches by 10 feet 6 inches, and 8 feet 6 inches high, from floor to ceiling. I purpose letting the double rooms at 2s. 6d., and the single at 1s. 6d. per week, and at those very low rates they would pay from 7 to 8 per cent. for the outlay, which of course would be reduced by the rates and taxes, and the expense in collecting the rents.

In arranging these plans, the great object has been to bring two rooms within the reach of the poor man, and to separate the families as much as possible, in order to do away with the present system, which is so very objectionable, and so injurious to morals, health, and comfort, where so many families are crowding in and out of one door, up and down over one staircase,—where constant disputes and contentions of every sort must take place; and to ensure, as much as practicable without incurring a great expense, a thorough ventilation, by throwing the houses open front and back, which is in a great measure achieved, and means provided for the constant admission of fresh air to the rooms, and a free passage for the escape of all noxious gases. In throwing the houses open front and back, the whole of the exterior will be open to the inspection of the passers by, which will tend to do away with all secret corners of filth for breeding disease, &c., which are not all the advantages to be derived by this system of building, as space is economized to a very considerable extent; for equal to 17 six-roomed houses can be built on an acre of ground more by this plan of building than can be by the present system.

It is hoped that by this description, however imperfect, the advantages and comforts arising from the proposed system of building houses for the very poor labouring classes, compared with the old, will be readily seen. To provide such for them would be like taking a man from the mire, and placing him where he can stand in safety, ease, and comfort, and without the fear of being molested,—where he can have free ingress and egress without being in any way interfered with,—where he will be enabled to make and call his two rooms his castle, and have the comforts of a clean and healthy home, without being obliged to associate against his inclination with those he is surrounded by,—and that at a rent within the compass of his means.*

Robert Netherway.

* The cross walls would be built of cement-concrete, with cast-iron standards; the floors would be formed with iron girders, corrugated iron, and concrete; the ceilings of topmost floors would be of iron.

RECOLLECTIONS OF PETER NICHOLSON.

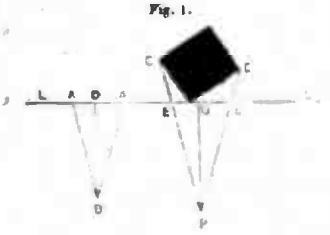
About the year 1811, Peter Nicholson called at my house in Wells-street, Cavendish-square, where I kept an architectural drawing-school, and without mentioning his name, said he wanted to place his son with me, and wished to see some of my copies on carpentry, which I showed him. In the course of conversation on the good and bad construction of roofs (for we had both, like Inigo Jones, originally been brought up to the building business), he alluded to the roof of Islington Church, which he said he once drew; and on my asking him what induced him to do it after its defects had been pointed out by Peter Nicholson, in his "Carpenters' New Guide," he said he was Peter Nicholson himself! and bluntly apologized for not having mentioned his name at first. On this announcement, I said, Then your son (Michael Angelo, for that was his name) does not need my instructions: he said, Yes he does, and I am desirous of becoming acquainted with you; and here our intimacy began.

He now informed me he was come to London to draw some plates for Dr. Rees' Cyclopædia, and to arrange with the publisher, Barfield, of Wardour-street, for a MS. Architectural Dictionary, which he had sold him. This work, he observed, was to have been a joint production between himself and a person of the name of Webster (whom I knew), but he had contributed no materials towards it. Webster had originally drawn the ornaments for Nicholson's "Principles of Architecture," published by Gardner, of Princes-street, Cavendish-square. He left the MS. of the Dictionary with me to look over, or as much as he had then written, to add whatever words I found had been omitted, even provincialisms, which were very numerous. The plan of the work I at once saw had evidently been suggested by that of Sheraton's folio Cabinet Dictionary, or rather Encyclopædia, which had been published a short time before.

Mr. Nicholson now became an inmate and boarder in my house, for some months, where he drew many of his plates for the above works, which were devised in the day-school. Here we often exercised each other in the solution of architectural diagrams, both theoretically and practically, for the mutual benefit of each other, some of which diagrams were afterwards published.

The following question in perspective was proposed by me:—As it is generally allowed that twice the width of the picture is the best distance for the point of view, how is this distance to be ascertained? P. N.'s answer: Let S, on Fig. 1, be the seat of a house, and

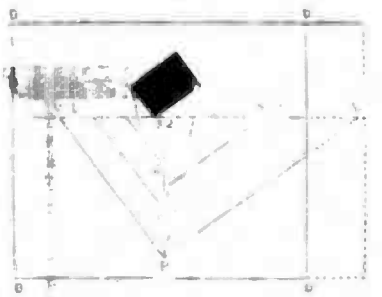
Fig. 1.



LL the line of the picture; on this line form the isosceles triangle, AAB, making DB equal to twice the width of AA, then draw the two extreme visual rays, CCP, parallel to the two sides of the isosceles triangle, and the object sought will be obtained, EE being once the width of the picture, and OP that of twice.

The following question in perspective was proposed by one of my pupils, Clarke Rampling, now an architect and surveyor at Birkenhead:—I want, says he, to ascertain the distance of the vanishing points of a building on the plan, when I am prevented by the narrowness of the drawing-board, without adding an additional piece of board or a book on each side. My reply: Let BBBB be the size of the drawing-board (Fig. 2), S the seat of the

Fig. 2.



house, P the station point, and LL the line of projection; divide the direct visual ray, P2 into two equal divisions: draw the line 1N parallel to the right hand side of the plan, and 2N will be half the distance of the vanishing point V. If the left hand side be divided into the like number, or in three or more divisions, it will show the operation very clearly.—Q. E. D.

Proceeding with my narrative: At this time I remember alluding to Nicholson's first publication, that of the "Carpenters' New Guide," which title, it appears, was given to the work on the following occasion: William Paine was at this time publishing a work on carpentry, called, "The Carpenters' Guide," on which Nicholson was rather severe in his animadversions, wishing to have the field to himself, for he never could bear a rival. In the "Carpenters' New Guide" he first offered a method of springing the mahogany plank, as it was termed, but more properly caning the plank on its edge, when finding the face moulds for cutting out the hand-rail of a staircase, so as to save wood. The former method had required the plank of mahogany to be 3 inches thick; it now required to be but 2½ inches. What gave rise to it was this: Graham, a celebrated staircase-hand at this time called on Nicholson one afternoon, when publishing his "Carpenters' New Guide," and told him there was no doubt if the plank was turned on its

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